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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2017  
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [IR](#) [PARM](#) [UK](#)  
SUBJECT: U.S. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON IRAN'S  
NUCLEAR PROGRAM: UK RESPONSE

REF: STATE 162558

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Richard LeBaron; reason 1.4 (b, d)

11. (S/NF) Summary: Per instructions reftel, DCM delivered reftel points December 3 to Permanent Under Secretary of State Peter Ricketts. Ricketts, who was accompanied by FCO's Iran Coordinator Antony Phillipson, appeared not to have been previously aware of the NIE or its contents. Nevertheless, Ricketts reacted immediately: his primary concern was that the public presentation by the U.S. and others not detract from our collective ability to generate pressure on the regime via a third UNSC resolution and via EU action on sanctions. We understand a number of direct contacts between US and UK officials either took place or were planned following the meeting with Ricketts. End Summary.

Ricketts: Presentation is Key  
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12. (S/NF) Ricketts told DCM the NIE report shows there was indeed cause for concern on Iran's military nuclear program. Ricketts argued that, although Iran may have previously walked away from the weaponization portion of its nuclear push, the NIE's conclusions further demonstrate the continuing need for Western concern over Iran's long-term nuclear intentions, as well as the importance and potency of unified international diplomacy. Ricketts repeatedly stressed the "critical importance of the presentation" of the NIE's conclusions.

Phillipson: NIE Findings Are Narrow  
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13. (S/NF) Phillipson, shortly before the Ricketts meeting and before Phillipson had seen the NIE text, commented that the public and Western partners must not allow the NIE to be seen as detracting in any way from current international diplomatic efforts on Iran, as any diplomatic momentum lost would be very hard to recover. Phillipson, both during DCM's call on Ricketts and during corridor conversation with London IW (Poloff) afterwards, stressed what he called a key distinction between Iran's ultimate intentions on its nuclear program, to which he argued the report does not speak, and Iran's technical capabilities, especially as to weaponization, which he said was the main focus of the NIE.

14. (S/NF) Comment: While Embassy believes Phillipson's

analysis may be narrower than that presented by the NIE, it is a point of view Washington interlocutors may hear again from HMG on the NIE's implications. Rickett's stated concern with public "presentation" continues themes the UK continuously makes to USG bilaterally on the central importance in HMG's view of how Western public unity and confidence on sanctions and the two-track process affects both regime psychology, on which FCO feels itself especially expert, as well as on the financial markets which are the main target of multilateral and unilateral financial steps to build pressure on Tehran. End comment.

15. (S/NF) Ricketts said he would coordinate with Number 10 and the Foreign Secretary; alert Downing Street and Foreign Minister. As DCM left the FCO, Phillipson was preparing for a conference call with P staff and E-3 counterparts, and for any more senior-level calls which may be initiated December 4 in Washington.

#### UK Press Points

16. (SBU) HMG's overnight press guidance on the NIE was: "We note the report and the US Government's reaction to it. We will discuss it with US Government analysts in more detail in coming days. But the report's conclusions justify the action already taken by the international community to get to the bottom of Iran's nuclear programme and to increase pressure on the regime to stop its enrichment and reprocessing activities." FCO on December 4 told Embassy their expanded press guidelines will cover the following points:

-- We are studying the report, which shows there was something to be concerned about;

-- We are still concerned and should be until Iran comes clean;

-- Now would be the worst time to relax; people should not be distracted by dates;

-- it is still vital to stop the Iranians now, as it will only get harder down the line."

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